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SUBJECT: KOSOVO WEEKLY UPDATE: STATUS DELAY GAMES

11. (SBU) Summary: Serbian officials, confident that a Kosovo status decision will be delayed considerably, augmented diplomatic overtures to Russia and European countries with the aim of isolating the USG in the push for independence. The GOS reacted quickly to the new draft UNSC resolution by echoing Russia's opposition and calling on its drafters to withdraw the resolution. The GOS indicated it had drafted a new Kosovo plan for Russia in advance of the President's summit with Russian President Putin in Kennebunkport. The GOS has refused to reveal any details either to the media or through our diplomatic requests, with Kosovo Minister Samardzic saying only the plan reflects that "it is very important [for Serbia] to have the process restart in the right way." Samardzic also assessed that Pristina would only be willing to engage in new talks with "encouragement from the United States." The Ambassador, in comments to the press, lamented the utter lack of realism in the GOS approach and reminded Belgrade that the current UNSCR draft was a final opportunity for additional input into the Ahtisaari Plan. End Summary.

GOS strategy: delay through more talks

12. (SBU) Belgrade focused its efforts this week on securing more international support for a delay on a status decision, attacking the draft UNSC resolution and renewing a call for fresh talks with Pristina. The GOS also revealed it drafted a new Kosovo plan for the Russians, but would not come forward with any details.

13. (U) On 6/19, after bilateral meetings with the Foreign Ministers of France, Portugal, Slovenia and the Netherlands, Deputy PM Djelic told Serbian media that he assessed "growing support" for further negotiations on Kosovo. Similarly, on a visit to Greece, FM Jeremic said on 6/20 that Athens also supports more talks "without conditions."

14. (SBU) Serbian leaders seized on ICTY prosecutor Carla Del Ponte's support for a delay in Kosovo status resolution. Rather than the usual denouncement of international representatives for overstepping their mandate in discussing Kosovo status, GOS officials here defended Del Ponte's statements. ICTY Cooperation Chair Rasim Ljajic said on 6/20 that Del Ponte was "entitled to point out to the UNSC anything that could contribute to Serbia's cooperation with ICTY." Ljajic also told reporters that Serbia believes Del Ponte's obligation was "to provide conditions" for cooperation with ICTY - implying that in such a context her remarks were within her authority. (Note: This is a disappointing but unsurprising assessment from a government that previously lambasted Del Ponte for calling on the EU to stall SAA talks due to lack of cooperation with ICTY. End note.)

PM attacks draft UNSCR, offers plan to Russians

¶5. (U) Even before the new draft UNSCR was tabled at in New York; a GOS attack on "predetermined negotiations" had been underway since Sarkozy's original announcement at the end of the G8 Summit. On 6/19, PM spokesperson Srdjan Djuric rejected a call for more talks with the automatic result of Kosovo independence at the end as unacceptable to Serbia. Djuric reiterated Serbia's call for "real negotiations and instead of political force." Belgrade heightened attacks on the idea after the formal submission of the new draft UNSCR on 6/20 and Russia's subsequent rejection. Building on Russian PermRep Churkin's assessment of the draft as "unacceptable", Djuric said on 6/21 that the GOS welcomed Russia's decision as a "continuation of principal policy and cooperation between Belgrade and Moscow based on the respect of the international law and UN Charter."

¶6. (U) In an official statement released on 6/21, Kostunica called on "Western nations" to withdraw the draft UNSCR because it "robs" Serbia of its territory and violates the UN Charter. Kostunica also assessed that any draft resolution based on the implementation of Ahtissari's plan that was "doomed" and would not pass the UNSC. Referring to the Serbian parliament's appeal to the UN Secretary-General for more talks, Kostunica said that "there has

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been no explanation...why negotiations were severed or why new and substantial talks on Kosovo have not been launched pursuant to Belgrade's initiative." Kosovo Minister Samardzic told the press that it would be incumbent on the USG to "encourage" the Kosovo Albanians to participate in new discussions.

¶7. (SBU) Kosovo Minister Samardzic confirmed on 6/21 that the GOS had drafted a new plan for Kosovo and submitted it to the Russians, but refused to reveal its contents. Samardzic told reporters on 6/21 that he gave Russian Ambassador to Serbia Alexander Alekseev a document presenting Serbia's proposals for further negotiations. He said only that the document draws from Serbia's national platform on Kosovo status (a wide autonomy plan). Samardzic added that Putin

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could use the document in his discussions with the President in their upcoming Kennebunkport summit in early July. When pressed by reporters on the document's content, Samardzic said that he "cannot discuss the content...it is [secret] in terms of form" but the "purpose of the document is to stimulate the Russian side and brief them on our ideas and positions." He added that the document includes specific proposals regarding "negotiation procedure" and that Serbia wants a quick restart to talks in the "direction of compromise." Official Embassy requests to the Kosovo Ministry have thus far been refused, but we understand informally that the so-called new plan is little more than a reiteration of "substantial autonomy."

¶8. (U) Serbian parliament Speaker Oliver Dulic expressed dissatisfaction on 6/21 over the GOS' refusal to share the plan. Dulic said that he was "impatiently waiting for the negotiating team or the Ministry for Kosovo to give some kind of document" for MPs to study and respond to. He stressed that it was "very important that the MPs should be informed about the situation in Kosovo and progress in our negotiations and our present situation."

Diplomatic Activity

¶9. (U) Denmark: Belgrade wires reported on 6/18 that Danish Defense Minister Gade said, during his visit to Kosovo, that the process of determining the future status of Kosovo had been postponed.

¶10. (U) Russia: According to local press reports, Serbian President Tadic and Putin will meet on June 24 in Zagreb as Croatia at the Southeast European Energy Summit.

¶11. (U) Slovenia: Serbian media reported Slovenian FM Rupel's comments that decision on Kosovo status might be postponed until Slovenia's EU chairmanship in 2008. He said that he would propose

postponing the Kosovo solution by several months due to disagreement among UNSC members. He added that the international community could use the postponement to make adjustments toward improving the position of Serbs in Kosovo while not going against the province's independence.

Comment

¶12. (SBU) Belgrade is triumphant with the change of tone among internationals from uniform insistence on a speedy resolution of Kosovo status to an increasing call for delay and more talks. The GOS is eagerly shaping new European calls for fresh talks -- along with what they consider unshakable Russian support -- into a sense of inevitable victory of Serbia's Kosovo policy and the death of the Ahtisaari Plan. Kostunica and his deputies' tone has evolved slightly vis-à-vis the USG, adding to outright attacks on our policy the brokering of an understanding between us and the Russians that more talks are needed, and that we are responsible for delivering the Kosovo Albanians. Kostunica has found an ally in this in Foreign Minister Jeremic, who keeps lamenting that Kosovo is now a "big power" issue, in which an innocent Serbia is squeezed -- through no action of its own -- between the titans. Meanwhile, Belgrade is relishing the intrigue around its "secret plan" for the Russians to use at the titans' encounter in July.

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